



History

Explore—Journal of Research for UG and PG Students

ISSN 2278 – 0297 (Print)

ISSN 2278 – 6414 (Online)

© Patna Women's College, Patna, India

<http://www.patnawomenscollege.in/journal>

Female education in Bihar (An overview)

Rafat Perween • Samreen Kausar • Monika Kumari
• Sister Celine Crasta A.C.

Received : December 2010
Accepted : February 2011
Corresponding Author : Sister Celine Crasta A.C.

Abstract : *Free and compulsory education has been enshrined in the Indian constitution since its inception. It became a guiding force in the form of article 45 for providing basic education for all the children up to the age of fourteen years without any discrimination of caste, creed, sex, religion, and colour. Even after more than 60 years of independence, though in some states progress is distinctly noticeable, many states are still struggling to achieve universal enrollment, retention and quality education, and some states lag far behind. Female Education in India is not a gift of modern*

civilization. India has always been a relentless champion of the cause of women at all international and national fronts. The policy makers have become conscious that real development cannot take root if it bypasses women, who represent the essential part around which social change must take shape. The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages that they could be facing. This research provides an overview of educational achievements and challenges in Bihar, one of India's backward states. There still exists disparity in educational opportunities between Bihar and India as a whole, and across socio-economic, spectrum and gender, location among other factors within Bihar. Nevertheless, overall access to school has slowly increased over the years, however, unequal opportunity in access to an equitable quality of education remains.

Rafat Perween

B.A. III year, History (Hons.), Session: 2008-2011,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Samreen Kausar

B.A. III year, History (Hons.), Session: 2008-2011,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Monika Kumari

B.A. III year, History (Hons.), Session: 2008-2011,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Sister Celine Crasta A.C.

Assistant Professor, Department of History,
Patna Women's College, Bailey Road,
Patna – 800 001, Bihar, India
E-mail : sr_celinecrasta@yahoo.com

Key words: *Female education, Elementary level, Secondary education, Government schemes.*

Introduction :

Mahatma Gandhi said, "By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man's body, mind and soul." Education is the integral formation of an individual that enables him or her to become a person of good character, competence, conscience and maturity. Education is not only important for men but equally to women. As Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Educate a man and you educate one person. Educate a woman and you educate the whole family." Women are the pillars of our society. They constitute half of the population and play a crucial role in all spheres of life. The purpose of providing education to women is to enable them to think critically, identify their strength and empower them to play a positive role in the development of the nation. Since independence the condition of female education has become worse than before. Nowadays education has become a basic need and a basic human right. Our constitution has granted equal right to education to men and women. In spite of this women face inequality. Bihar has the least literate female population in India. While the literacy rates of other states have increased to a commendable height, Bihar has not reached that height. The female literacy is as low as 33.57%. But a great change has been taking place in recent days. To some extent common people have changed their attitude towards girls' education and with this the Government is also taking major steps to improve the condition of female education.

Objectives:

- To create awareness about the condition of female education in Bihar and to estimate the

progress which is taking due to the efforts of the government and also the changes in our society regarding female education.

- The purpose of having this research is, to analyze the changing educational condition of female with special reference to Bihar, as it is the state with lowest literacy rate in India and to highlight the reasons behind it.

Methodology:

The study is based on information and data collected through:-

- Interaction with the students and other people of different schools.
- A study of selected number of secondary sources and publications, magazines, journals, official reports regarding the issue.
- A study of the policies enforced by the central and state governments, their plans and programmes concerning the issue.
- Constitutional and legal provisions available regarding the issue.
- Consultation of books on female education – by feminist historians and educationists.

Tools and Techniques:

- Pictures and slides showing girls going to school.
- Study of different programmes and schemes for promoting female education like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mukhyamantri Cycle Yojna etc.

Methods of Data Analysis:

- Survey of different institutions in rural areas and urban parts of Bihar.

- Books and Journals.
- Data from Internet.

Barriers to girls' education :

- **Poverty :** Over one third of the population is estimated to be living below the poverty line. Although attending the school is free, the cost of books, uniforms and transportation to school is not affordable for poor families.
- **Negative Parental attitude:** Across the country, marriage is seen as the ultimate objective of a daughter's upbringing. Girls are regarded as 'Paraya dhan' or belonging to another family. This temporary membership of a girl in her natal home, which she has to leave once she is married, makes her education a less beneficial and less relevant option for poor families.
- **Gender discrimination:** In India, the sons are regarded as 'economic assets' providing financial assistance and security to parents in their old age. On the other hand, parents see the education of daughters a waste of money.
- **Inadequate school facilities:** There is lack of enough classrooms and basic necessities such as sanitary facilities or water and toilets. Lack of toilets is, in fact, the primary reason for non retention of girls in schools. According to DISE in 2006-07 there were only 10.28 percent girl's toilets in the schools of Bihar.
- **Early Marriage:** Compulsion of early marriage makes schooling a poor option for girls.
- **Shortage of female teachers:** Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girl's education. Girls are more likely to attend

schools and have higher academic achievements, if they have female teachers. Bihar has 20 percent of female teachers in primary schools as compared to 67.3 percent in Kerala and 58.5 per cent in Punjab. The percentage is considerably low in Bihar.

- **Insecure environment :** The onset of puberty introduces dramatic changes in the life of a girl. This is also one of the reasons that people are very concerned about the security of their girls and hesitate to send them out.
- **Lack of encouragement:** In addition, to the above reasons we can also see the lack of encouragement in our society. Girls do not enjoy the same facilities and care as compared to boys.

Why is girls' education important?

- **Reduces women's fertility rates:** It is estimated that one year of female schooling reduces fertility by 10 percent.
- **Lowers infant and child mortality rates:** Women with some formal education are more likely to seek medical care, ensure that their children are immunized, are better informed about their children's nutritional requirements and adopt improved sanitation practices.
- **Lowers maternal mortality rates:** Women with formal education tend to have better knowledge about health care practices, are less likely to become pregnant at a very young age, tend to have fewer and better spaced pregnancies, and seek pre and post natal care. It is estimated that an additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps to prevent two maternal deaths.

- **Protects against HIV/AIDS infection:** Education reduces the spread of HIV/AIDS by contributing towards female economic independence, delayed marriage, family planning and work outside the home as well as greater information about disease and its prevention.
- **Increases women's labour force participation rates and earnings:** Education has been proven to increase income for wage earners and increase productivity for employers, yielding benefits for the community and society as a whole.
- **Creates intergenerational education benefits:** Mother's education is a significant variable affecting children's educational attainment and opportunities. A mother with a few years of formal education is considerably more likely to send her children to school.
- **Empowerment of women.** This is one of the main reasons why female education is necessary. If women are educated then it will build self confidence among them which will result in empowerment of women.
- **Economic independence.** If a woman is educated and empowered, she will also be a contributor to the source of income of the family.
- **Lastly,** investment in girls' education not only yields private and social benefits but it plays a significant role in the development of nation.

Bihar, the highest illiterate state of India

- According to the 2001 census, Bihar had the lowest literacy rate in the country.

- Findings of the Youth Study indicate that schooling was far from universal among young people, particularly young women in Bihar; indeed as many as half of young women had never been to school.
- Almost two-thirds of married young women (64%) had never been to school, compared to slightly over one-quarter of unmarried young women (27%).
- Over half of Young women in rural areas (55%) compared to one in five of those from urban settings (22%) had never been to school.
- Kisanganj district of Bihar is least female literate district of the country. Only 20% girls are educated. The female literacy rates of two other districts viz. Supaul and Madhepura are 21.02% and 22.3% respectively.
- The girls' enrollments in primary and upper primary levels are 48.6% and 40.3% respectively.
- Among the STs the literacy rate is highest in the state of Mizoram (86.95%) and lowest in Bihar (15.54%).
- Among the rural population, the female literacy rate is highest in Mizoram (77.71%) and lowest in Bihar (13.30%).

Table – 1 : Literacy Rates (1951-2001)
(India & Bihar)

Census Years	In (%age)			
	Bihar		India	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1951	22.68	4.22	27.2	8.9
1961	35.85	8.11	40.4	15.4
1971	35.86	9.86	46.0	22.0
1981	47.11	16.61	56.4	29.8
1991	52.49	22.89	64.20	39.19
2001	59.70	33.10	75.90	54.2

Female education in Bihar (An overview)

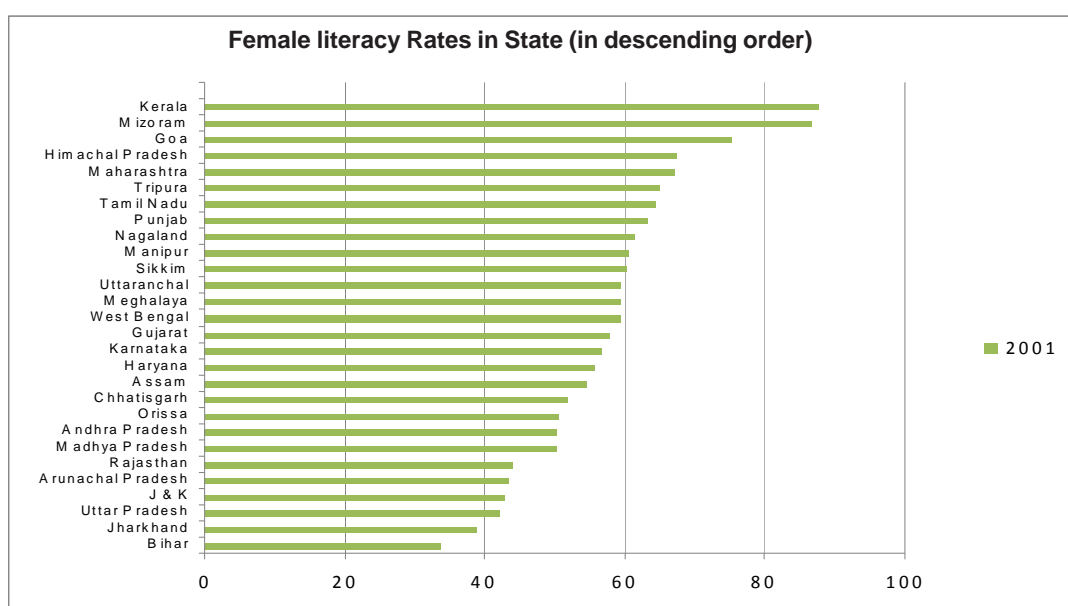


Fig.1

Literacy Rates of the Districts of Bihar

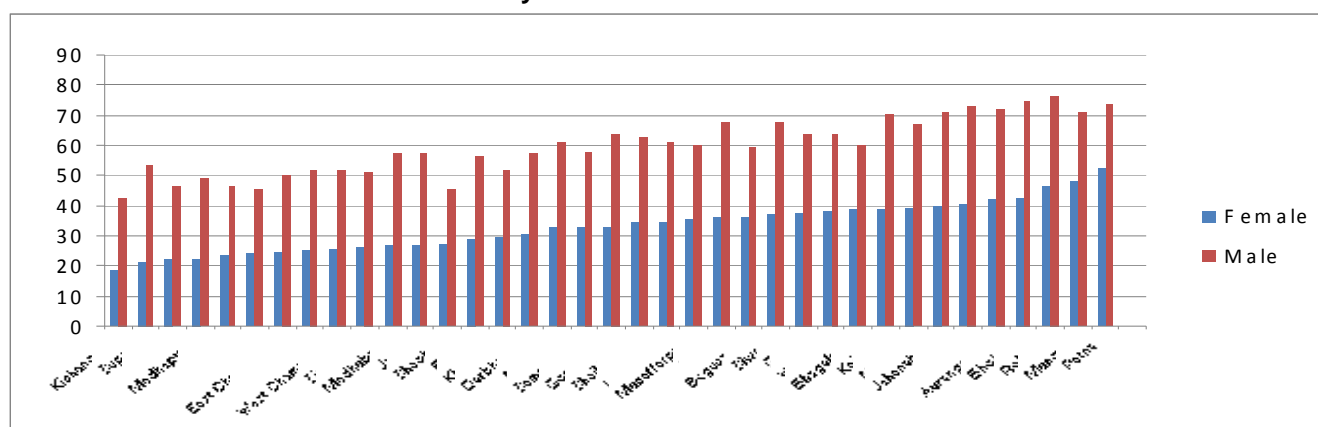


Fig. 2

Table – 2 : Dropout Rates at various stages of School Education in Bihar
(Compared with All-India Figures)

General				Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe		
Classes	I-V	I-VIII	I-X	I-V	I-VIII	I-X	I-V	I-VIII	I-X
Bihar	59.03	78.03	82.58	46.36	83.85	90.02	61.22	82.84	89.05
India	31.47	52.32	62.69	36.56	59.42	73.13	48.93	70.05	79.25

Table – 3 : Out of School Children (2007)

State	Population		Out of school		% out ofschool	
	Bihar					
	6-11	11-14	6-11	11-14	6-11	11-14
Female	6356461	2554292	508770	267107	8.00	10.46
Male	7407208	3185876	492794	272142	6.65	8.54

Table-4 : Key Indicators for Urban and Rural area in Bihar from NFHS-3 and NFHS-2

Highest educational level attained: Women (15-49 years)				
S. No.		Urban	Rural	Total
1.	No education	36.2	67.1	62.1
2.	Primary	8.1	10.4	10.0
3.	Secondary	45.3	21.8	25.5
4.	Higher	10.4	0.8	2.4

Table – 5 : DISE 2006-07; Bihar Vis-a-Vis All India selected Indicators at Elementary level

Sl. No.	Indicators	Primary		All Schools	
		Bihar	India	Bihar	India
1.	% Single Classroom Schools	11.51	13.79	8.61	9.71
2.	% Single Teacher Schools	6.79	15.90	5.12	11.76
3.	% Schools with pre-primary sections	8.72	26.69	9.45	24.22
4.	% Schools with Common Toilet	38.88	53.75	46.73	58.13
5.	% Schools with Girl's Toilet	10.28	34.06	16.21	42.58
6.	% Student in schools having electricity connection	1.60	21.39	3.60	33.23
7.	% of Primary Schools Established since 1994	12.44	33.20	9.08	31.94
8.	% Enrolment in Government schools	99.33	87.43	98.66	78.56
9.	Student-Classroom Ratio (SCR)	92	40	91	36
10.	% Schools having playground	26.86	45.89	33.57	52.48
11.	% Girls Enrolment (Primary)	45.89	48.09	45.17	47.67
12.	% Girls Enrolment (Upper Primary)	41.66	46.51	45.17	47.67
13.	% SC enrolment	17.62	20.11	16.85	19.87
14.	% SC girls to SC Enrolment	43.72	48.01	43.02	47.53
15.	% ST Enrolment	1.82	11.36	1.69	10.69
16.	% ST girls to ST Enrolment	45.76	47.98	45.35	47.24
17.	% of enrolment in schools with SCR ratio ≥ 60	77.99	36.42	81.37	31.33
18.	% Female Teachers	28.41	40.89	27.91	41.86
19.	Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	62	39	64	34
20.	Gender Parity Index (GPI)	0.85	0.93	0.82	0.91

Secondary Education

Secondary Education is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work.

With the liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy, the rapid changes witnessed in scientific and technological world and the general need to improve the quality of life and to reduce poverty, it is essential that school learners acquire a higher level of knowledge and skills than what they are provided in the 8 years of elementary education, particularly when the average earning of a secondary school certificate holder is significantly higher than that of a person who has studied only up to class VIII. There was a 20% point gap between urban and rural secondary enrolment rates, and a persistent 10% point gap between secondary enrolment rates of boys and girls. Secondary enrolment also varies from state to state from 22% in **Bihar** to 92% in Kerala and from 4% in Jharkhand to 44% in Tamil Nadu. In rural Bihar, the total number of secondary schools was 2528 in the year 2002 in which 11 schools were without building. In rural Bihar, according to 7th All India Educational Survey, 2003, total enrolment of girls in the IX-X classes was 158278, and in I-X classes was 4322836 whereas boys enrolment was 387974 and 6413913 respectively. At the national level, the average number of secondary/higher secondary schools per 1 lakh population is as low as 14 and it is lower than the national average in **Bihar**

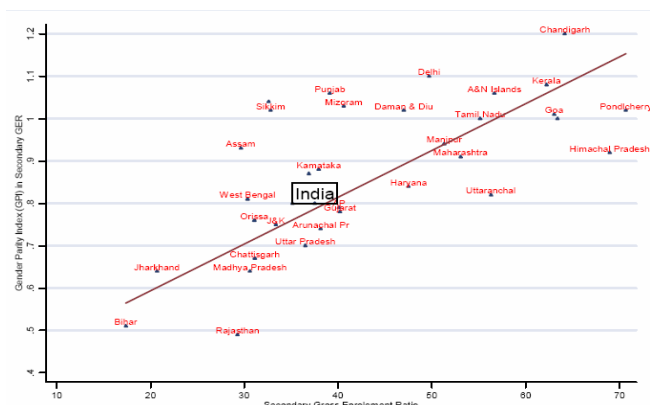


Fig.-3 : Percentage of youth, who had completed secondary school, according to household economic status in Bihar

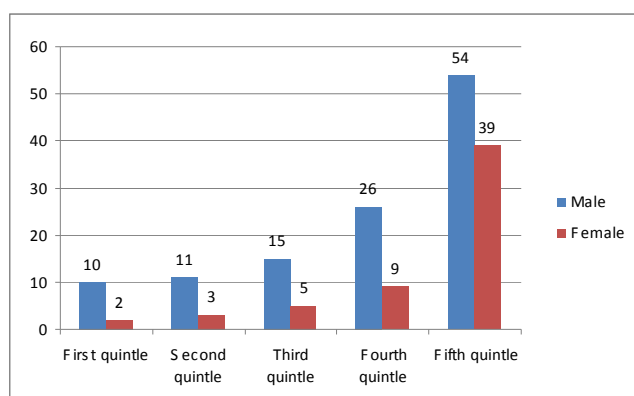


Fig.– 4 : Percentage of youth who had completed Classes 4, 7 and 10 in Bihar

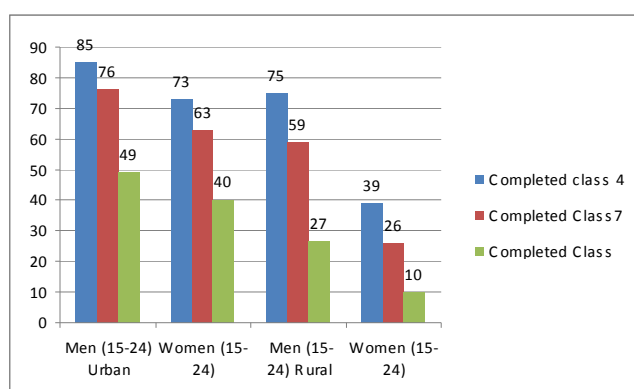


Fig. – 5 : Percentage of Youth who had completed losses 4, 5 and 7

Higher Education

The women enrolment in the colleges as a percentage of total enrolment in a State is the highest in Kerala (61.16%) and the lowest in Bihar (24.50%). In terms of absolute numbers of women enrolment, Maharashtra tops the list of states with 7.04 lakh, followed by U.P. (5.95 lakhs) etc.

Patna Women's College founded in 1940, by Bishop B.J. Sullivan, S.J. and Mother M. Josephine, A.C. is conducted by the sisters of the Apostolic Carmel. It was the first women's college in Bihar and, in this sense; it is the pioneer of women's higher education in the state.

Table–6 : Women's enrolment at college level

State	Total	Science	Engineering & technology	Medicine	Agriculture	Veterinary science
Bihar	23.9	21.0	11.9	20.7	32.2	12.8
Kerala	60.0	63.9	30.6	56.5	53.8	47.6

Government Schemes Focused on Girls' Education

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) recognized the urgent need to enhance the levels of girls' participation in education, and emphasized gender mainstreaming on the one hand, and introduction of special schemes for promoting girls' education on the other. The commitment to girls' and women's empowerment through education was also evident in National Policy on Education, 1986: Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women.

SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or 'Education for All' programme recognizes that ensuring girl's education requires changes not only in the education system but also in societal norms and attitudes.

Some of the targeted Provisions for Girls under SSA

- Free textbooks
- Separate toilets for girls
- Recruitment of 50% women teachers
- Back to school camps for out-of-school girls
- Bridge courses for older girls
- Gender-sensitive teaching-learning material
- **National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Level:** NPEGEL is an important component of SSA, launched with the objective of providing additional support for girls' education. It focuses on promoting schooling for girls at the secondary stage, especially girls from disadvantaged communities, through a range of 55 strategic interventions.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme:** Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) is

a scheme launched in July 2004, for setting up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minority communities.

- **Mid-day Meal Scheme:** This scheme is designed for the primary schools. The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE), popularly known as the Mid-day Meal scheme, was launched in 1995.
- **Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS and AIE)** are designed to provide access to elementary education to out-of-school children, and those who live in school-less habitations.
- **The Mahila Samakhyia programme** was launched in 1989 to fulfill the commitment to affirmative action in support of women's education mandated in the National Policy on Education.
- **Scholarship schemes for Minorities:** Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India has launched a scholarship scheme of Pre-Matric, Post Matric and merit cum means scholarship for the students of the minority communities in which 30% of scholarship are earmarked for girls.
- **Girls' Hostel Scheme:** A scheme for providing assistance to voluntary organization for running Girls' Hostels had been in operation since 1993-94. The scheme has been replaced with a new scheme under which financial assistance will be provided to the State Governments for setting up Girls' Hostels in about 3500 educationally backward blocks.
- **National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education:** The Government of India has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme called "National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education" in June, 2008. According to the Scheme, a sum of Rs.3000/- will be deposited in the name of

eligible girl as fixed deposit and she would be entitled to withdraw it along with interest thereon reaching 18 years of age.

- **Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana:** Under this scheme, all girls would be given bicycles free of cost by the State Government after getting admission to Class IX.
- **Hunar:** In a bid to empower Muslim girls, the Bihar Government has launched a new scheme called 'Hunar' which is a collaborative project of the Bihar Govt. and the Union Human Resource Department Ministry. It endeavours to raise the educational standards of Muslim girl.
- **Mukhyamantri Balika Poshak Yojana:** Under this scheme, girl students from class VI to VIII would get Rs.700 every year for purchasing two pairs of uniform.
- **Mukhyamantri Kanya Suraksha Yojana:** The state government would invest Rs. 2,000 for the first two girls in a family living under the Below Poverty Level (BPL). The amount of Rs.2000/- will be invested on completion of 18 years the amount equal to the maturity value will be paid to the girl child (Rs. 18000/).

Conclusion

Women education in India today is racing ahead at a far greater pace than in the last decade. Efforts are on to improve the literacy rate through government educational schemes. Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in India and, in the 2001 census, was the only Indian state where the majority of the population (53%) was illiterate. The analysis of the data reveals that in order to universalize elementary education for all in Bihar much more needs to be done. So we may include some suggestions that could enhance the participation of girls in schools and to encourage them for education.

- More Female Teachers
- Improved Quality of Teaching
- Adequate number of Teachers
- Schools close to home or with safe, low-cost transport in case the school is far from home
- Textbooks to be provided on time
- Access to bathrooms, drinking water
- More schools, especially more middle schools
- Families should not give girls too much housework
- Sufficient number of classrooms
- Proper information and timely implementation of incentives schemes
- NGO partnership and community involvement for setting up girls' groups and women's groups with focus on education.

References:

- Bhawna Chawla (2007). 'Women's Education, Health and Fertility: Examining Three States in India: Bihar, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu; International Comparative Education, Stanford University, School of Education.
- Jose Kalapura, Prashant Dutt Ranjan (2008). 'Women's Rights in Bihar': Indian social Institute, New Delhi & Xavier's Institute of Social Research.
- Premji Azim Foundation (Oct. 2004). 'The Social Context of Elementary Education in Rural India': 26-30.
- Present Status of School Education in Bihar (chap.-4). Pdf.
- 'Research Abstracts on Education 1998-2009' (2010). National Institute of Public Co operation and Child Development, 5, Siri Institutional Area, Hauz Khas, New Delhi: 75-80
- Sudanshu Patra S., Savita Kaushal 'Elementary Education in Bihar: Some Reflections from DISE' : 1-10 .
- Youth in India: Situation and Needs, Ensuring education for all in Bihar: Highlighting the obstacles, (2009) Policy Brief Number 20.